

## **Scilla Latham - Church Buildings Support Officer**

Scilla Latham, our new Church Buildings Support Officer started work in January. The appointment is part of the English Heritage *Inspired'* programme which helps congregations to help themselves. English Heritage is providing £1.5 million to part-fund 30 Support Officers for congregations of any faith or denomination who are working to maintain the historic places of worship in their care. The scheme will help best practice in conservation and management of historic places of worship to be shared across the country.

This post has been made possible through a funding partnership with English Heritage, the Diocese of Ely, Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust and the All Churches Trust. Scilla is employed by Cambridgeshire ACRE and is based in Littleport, where she is benefiting from the experience of other community project officers who have experience of many of the parishes with which she will be working.

The main objectives for this three year project are to:

1. Improve the confidence within congregations to manage, maintain and extend the community use of their buildings
2. Develop action plans for the places of worship in parishes identified as priorities for support in extending the use of their buildings
3. Increase the flow of external funding to congregations for the upkeep of their buildings
4. Develop community cohesion through a greater sense of partnership between local communities and the church
5. Develop a strategy for the long-term management of historic places of worship throughout the diocese
6. Increase appreciation of the value of historic places of worship in the community.

The primary focus of Scilla's work will be to give extra help to individual congregations, in particular, those responsible for churches identified as priorities for support. She will be giving practical advice and assistance throughout their project to extend the use of their church. Scilla says that in order to secure a sustainable future for parish churches it is "essential to re-establish them as the focal point in their communities so they become a space that is shared, enjoyed and valued by the whole community".

The launch event for the project will be at St Peter's church, Wentworth on 31<sup>st</sup> March, where there will be an opportunity to find out more about the scheme, as well as hear of the experiences of parishes that have successfully established their churches as community hubs.

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